

PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Saint Mary's Missionary Baptist Church

AGENDA ITEM: C

OWNERS: Saint Mary's Missionary Baptist Church

HPO FILE NO.: HP2022_0123

APPLICANTS: Geraldine D. Grant and Margott Williams

DATE ACCEPTED: MAY 12, 2022

LOCATION: 4602 Eli Street, Houston, Texas, 77007

HAHC HEARING: OCT. 20, 2022

SITE INFORMATION: Lots 1 & 2, Block 83, Brunner, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas.
Designation is requested for the two-story, brick building.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Protected Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

Saint Mary's Missionary Baptist Church is a two-story, brick building constructed in 1964. It is located in the Brunner Addition, which lies west of downtown Houston and is adjacent to the Rice Military Addition. The church was founded in 1919 by a group of African American settlers new to the area. Two of the settlers, Brother John Dixon and Brother George Stubberfield, worked to establish a home for the congregation by appealing to the Reverend W.M. Jones of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church for assistance in organizing a Baptist church.

The current brick building that serves as the home for Saint Mary's was built in 1964 under the direction of the Reverend C.S. Gunnells, who was pastor at the time. The church building was previously located at 1901 Patterson Street, which is now in the path of Interstate 10. When the freeway was built, many homes, churches and businesses had to relocate.

Saint Mary's Missionary Baptist Church is seeking a protected landmark designation to record, preserve and commemorate its important history, as well as ensure that the building remains part of the historic architecture in Brunner for generations to come. The church is among the last surviving structures from the African American community that settled in Houston's West End in the early 20th century. The building meets criteria 1, 5 and 8 for landmark designation and criteria 1 for protected landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

BRUNNER ADDITION

The Brunner Addition is located west of downtown Houston, adjacent to the Rice Military Addition. Historically, Brunner was situated on the Houston and Texas Central Railway three miles west of Houston. This area was once an independent community with a post office as early as 1888, a Baptist College from 1895, a German school and a public school. Furthermore, the community had two

churches and a saloon. A streetcar shuttle line was opened in 1892, providing transportation between Brunner and downtown Houston.

Brunner was founded as a German community. When the town was established, it was considered to be “way out” on Washington Avenue. In 1894, the population was approximately 200. In the late 1890s, the population increased to 500 and remained around that figure through the early 1900s. It was considered to be a successful residential development; building lots sold for \$150 to \$300.

By 1913, Houston had built up around Brunner. As Houston extended its city limits, several small towns were annexed into the city. An article published in the *Houston Chronicle* on July 27, 2013, noted that a proposal was brought before City Council to extend the city limits and “take in territory on the west of the present city limits, including Montrose, Hyde Park Heights and surrounding additions, Brunner, Military Park, Cheneyville, etc.” In another article from 1913, it was suggested that Brunner be annexed by Houston Heights, which was an independent city at that time. Some residents of Brunner opposed annexation by either the Heights or Houston, stating that they did not want “heavy taxation.” Brunner was annexed by the City of Houston in 1913.

SAINT MARY’S MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Saint Mary’s Missionary Baptist Church was founded in 1919 by a group of African American settlers new to the area now known as the West End. Two of the settlers, Brother John Dixon and Brother George Stubberfield, worked to establish a home for the congregation by appealing to the Reverend W.M. Jones of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church for assistance in organizing a Baptist church.

Saint Mary’s was first located at the foot of Patterson Street; it later relocated to 1901 Patterson Street. Construction of Interstate 10 required the congregation to relocate. In 1964, a new church building was completed and the congregation moved to 4602 Eli Street, where the church is located today.

The first pastor of Saint Mary’s was Reverend R.J. Jordan, who had ministered at Mt. Sinai Baptist Church. As the first pastor, he helped organize the church; under his direction, the initial officers were chosen and the membership grew. Reverend Jordan served as minister for twelve years.

Reverend M.J. Steward of Kansas City, Missouri, and Revard J.L. Lampley of Houston, followed as ministers of the church. Each served briefly. Reverend M.H. Hunter was the next pastor for 12 years. While he was pastor, Saint Mary’s church debts were paid, membership grew and improvements were made to the church building.

In 1942, Reverend J.B. Norman was the pastor. He served for 10 years. His wife was also a spiritual leader. During the 1940s, land was purchased to build a new sanctuary for the growing membership.

Following Reverend Norman was Reverend C.S. Gunnells, who served for 45 years. He trained and ordained many ministers during his tenure. The current brick building that serves as the home for Saint Mary’s was built in 1964 under the direction of Reverend Gunnells. The church building was previously

located at 1901 Patterson Street, which is now in the path of Interstate 10. When the freeway was built, many homes, churches and businesses had to relocate.

The current pastor of Saint Mary's is Reverend Charles C. Davis, who was elected in April 1999. During his time, the membership has continued to grow. The choir, mission and other auxiliaries were rebuilt. Reverend Davis has mentored community members and aspiring ministers. He believes that the church should be of service to the community.

Note: History is adapted from "The History of St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church Located at 4602 Eli Street, Houston, Texas" document provided by the applicant, see Exhibit D.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Saint Mary's Missionary Baptist Church is a two-story, L-shaped, brick veneer building at the corner of Eli Street and Fowler Street. It sits on a slab foundation. The building has a front-gabled, low-pitched roof facing Eli Street.

The façade facing Eli Street is asymmetrical. It is two bays wide. The first (left) bay contains a pair of glass and metal doors under a flat-roofed metal canopy. A two-over-two, metal sash window with diamond-pattern grille and brick sill is centered above the door. The first bay has a very low pitched hipped roofed, which is topped by a four-tiered, stepped-back steeple surmounted by a metal cross. The second (right) bay is much wider than the first bay and contains the main body of the church. The second bay is topped by a shallow prow gable with boxed eaves. A large panel with horizontal siding is centered under the gable. The panel is topped by a string of four metal windows with diamond-pattern grille. The cornerstone is located on the lower right side of the façade.

There is a pair of metal and glass doors with a flat-roofed metal canopy on the left side of the Fowler Street façade. Three tall, narrow, six-light metal-frame windows are to the right of the entry doors. The windows have diamond-patterns grilles and brick sills. A single, metal and glass door with flat-roofed metal canopy is on the right side of the building. A single two-over-two, metal sash window with diamond-patter grille and brick sill is centered above the door.

RESTORATION HISTORY

During Hurricane Ike, the decorative bricks on the exterior façade facing Eli Street were blown off. The church replaced the bricks with wood panels.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baron, Steven M. *Houston Electric: The Street Railways of Houston, Texas*. Colorado: Steven M. Barron, 1996.

Harris County Archives Map (Brunner annexed):

<http://www.harriscountyarchives.com/Maps/imgZ.html?img=MC012Map701Houston1928>

Harris County Appraisal District, Real Property Account Information and Ownership Information for 4602 Eli Street, Houston, Texas, 77007. Accessed April 2022.

Houston Chronicle Historical Archive (1905-2015). Houston Public Library, Houston and Texas Resources.

_____, "Twenty-two Charter Amendments Ready for O.K. by Houston Voters." July 27, 1913.

_____, "Citizens Adjacent to Heights Protest Against Annexation." July 15, 1913.

_____, "Council Will Hear Citizens on Annexation." April 21, 1914.

_____, "Majority in Brunner Favors Annexation with City of Houston." September 6, 1913.

_____, "Brunner an Old Section." September 13, 1913.

McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses: Revised and Expanded*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

Saint Mary's Missionary Baptist Church, 100th Anniversary Celebration, Documents. Scanned and provide by applicant Geraldine D. Grant. See Exhibit C through J. Received via Email.

The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by [Planner Name], Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation

(a) The HAHC, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider one or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the type of designation:

S	NA	S - satisfies	D - does not satisfy	NA - not applicable
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

EXHIBIT A
CURRENT PHOTOS

SAINT MARY'S MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
4602 ELI STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77007



FAÇADE FACING ELI STREET



EXHIBIT C
SAINT MARY'S FOUNDERS
SAINT MARY'S MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
4602 ELI STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77007

Founders
Bro John Dixon
Sis. Freddie Dixon
Bro. Batiste Hanes

First Meeting
Slaughter pen of Mr. Gus Anderson

1st Minister: Rev. R. J. Jordan (1919) 1st Lady: Sis. Sophia Jordan

First Members (1919)
George & Ellen Stubberfield
Joe & Birdie Bush
Sis. Mattie Cavanaugh
Sis. Mary James
Carrie & Arthur Fitch
Harvey Rucker
Ben F. Rucker Sr.

1st Officers: (1919)
Deacons : Batiste Hanes, John Dixon, Joe Bush, George Stubblefield
Secretary: Sis. Freddie Dixon
Treasurer: Sis. Ellen Stubberfield
Supt., Sunday School: George Stubblefield
President, Mission: Sis. Birdie Bush
President, Bible Band: Sis. Hattie Cavanaugh
President, Choir: Batiste Hanes
President, BYPU: Bro. D. C. Cavanaugh

Early Officers under Rev. Norman (1942)
Deacons: Harold Norton, E. Van Owens, Jimmie Reese, Gus Williams, George Davis, Jerry Johnson, Dan D. Lane, John Wilder, John Wilson

Associate Pastors: Rev. Joe Paley, Rev. L. L. Jones
President of Mission: Sis. Hattie Lane
Church Secretary: Bro. Wilbert Rasmus
Supt., Sunday School: Bro. E. Van Jones
President, BYPU: Rev. J. L. Jones
President, Laymen League: Harold Norton
President, Usher Board: Wilbert Rasmus
President of Choir: Sis. Viola Norman
President, Mission Chorus: Sis. Leola Davis
President, Men Chorus: Bro. Ray Franklin
President, Junior Choir: Bro. C. B. Blanton

Note: There is also a cornerstone which was removed from the original building at 1901 Patterson St.

EXHIBIT D
SAINT MARY'S HISTORICAL NARRATIVE
SAINT MARY'S MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
4602 ELI STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77007

**The History of St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church
located at 4602 Eli St., Houston, Texas**

In the early part of 1919, a group of settlers moved into what is now known as the West End Section of the City of Houston. There were few houses and one Methodist Church in the area at the time. Two settlers, Bro. John Dixon and Bro. George Stubberfield, appealed to Rev. W. M. Jones, a pastor at Mt. Sinai Baptist Church and Vice Moderator of the Independent District Association, to assist them in organizing a Baptist church. After an initial meeting, the church was named St. Mary's Baptist Church.

Rev. R. J. Jordan, an energetic soul-stirring minister associated with Mt. Sinai Baptist Church, was selected as the first pastor of the newly organized church. Initial officers were chosen and, after three months meeting at the foot of Patterson St., the church relocated to 1901 Patterson St. Rev. Jordan served as minister of St. Mary's for 12 years before being called to pastor a church in San Antonio, Texas. During Rev. Jordan's tenure, the membership grew.

Two ministers briefly succeeded Rev. Jordan as pastors of St. Mary's MBC: Rev. M.J. Steward of Kansas City, Missouri and Rev. J. L. Lampley of Houston, Texas.

Rev. M. H. Hunter succeeded Rev. Lampley and served as pastor for 12 years. During that time, membership continued to grow, the church's original indebtedness was paid off, and many improvements were made to the building.

In 1942, Rev. J. B. Norman was selected as pastor. The church continued to thrive and purchased land to build a sanctuary large enough to accommodate its growing membership. Rev. Norman ordained several ministers and led St. Mary's for 10 years, before relocating to Beaumont, Tx. Rev. and Mrs. Norman were great spiritual leaders who strived for a program ordained by the Lord.

In 1953, Rev. C. S. Gunnells was called to pastor St. Mary's. In 1964, under the leadership of Rev. Gunnells, the church built and moved to its current location on Eli St. Rev. Gunnells presided over legions of baptisms, weddings, and eulogies, and his legacy includes the training and/or ordainment of numerous ministers, including our current pastor, Rev. Charles C. Davis. Rev. Gunnells served faithfully for 45 years before retiring and joining the church as a member. During that time, he left a lasting impression on hundreds of families in the city of Houston and beyond.

Rev. Charles C. Davis was elected as pastor in April, 1999, and humbly continues to strive toward the spiritual growth and development of the church. Progress has been made, members have been added, and the choir, Mission, and other auxiliaries have been rebuilt. Rev. Davis believes the church should be of service to the community at large. For more than 20 years, he has participated in numerous baptisms, weddings, and Homegoing services and has made himself available as a mentor to aspiring ministers and to those in need. His mottos are "Is it Well with your Soul?" and "I Will Trust in the Lord".

We have come this far by faith, and, although the West End has faced the challenge of gentrification throughout the last three decades, we pray that St. Mary's, here on the corner of Eli and Fowler, will continue to thrive and serve as a beacon of light to the West End and the community at large.

April, 2019

EXHIBIT E
SAINT MARY'S PREVIOUS BUILDING
SAINT MARY'S MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
4602 ELI STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77007

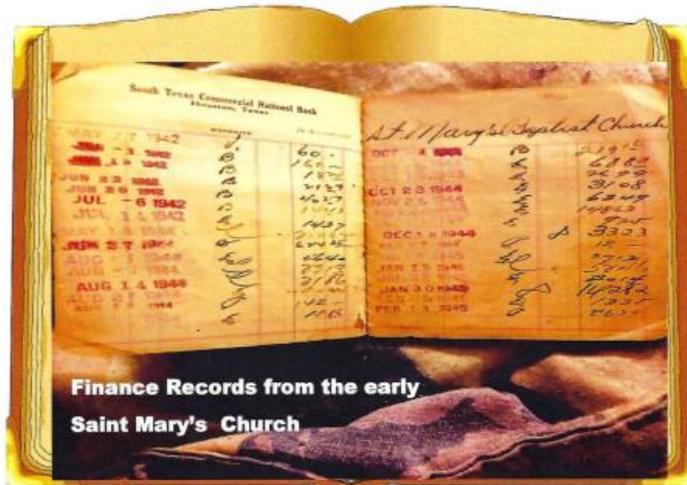
Rebuilding of Saint Mary's Baptist Church 1901 Patterson , 1940

Reverend W Jordan, Pastor

Sis Freddie Dixon, Church Secretary , Deacon John Dixon

C Cavannough, W J Parks, Sis J H Haines, Sis Walker, Deacon Joe Bush

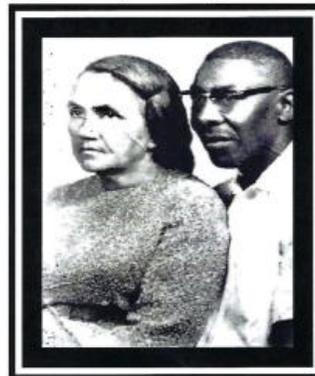
G W Stubblefield, S Fitch, E W Walkins , Deacon Alex Walker



**Finance Records from the early
Saint Mary's Church**



Dea A Walker, Mrs libbey Nelson



NOTE: CORRECT SPELLING IS MRS. LIBBIE NELSON

EXHIBIT F

SAINT MARY'S ORIGINAL CORNERSTONE 1919
SAINT MARY'S MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
4602 ELI STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77007

Cornerstone 1919

St. Mary's Baptist Church Organized 1919

By Rev. W Jordan – Pastor

Sis. Freddie Dixon – Secretary

Deacons

Dea. Joe Bush

Dea. G. W. Stubblefield

Dea. J. Dixon

Dea. W. J. Parks

Dea. E. W. Walkins

Dea. A. Walker

Trustee

Bro. C. Cavannough

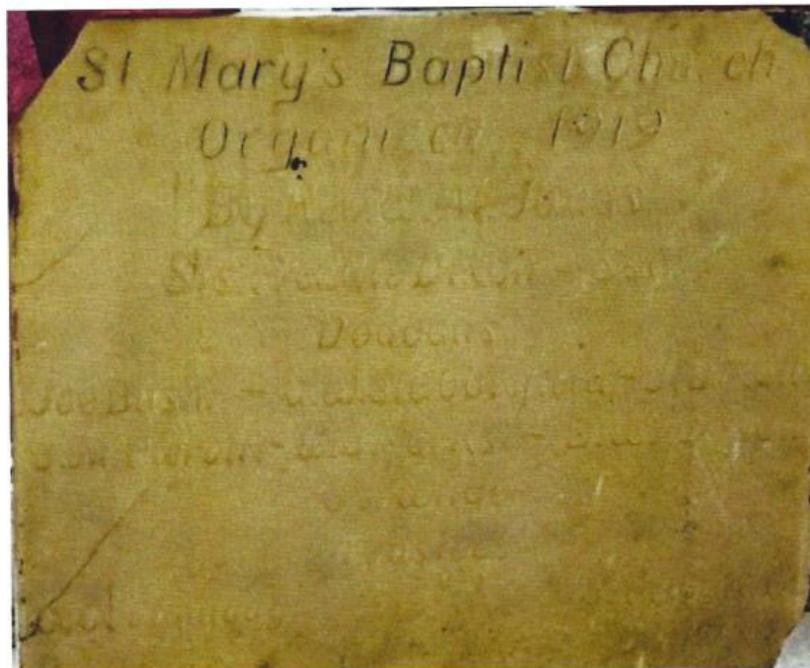


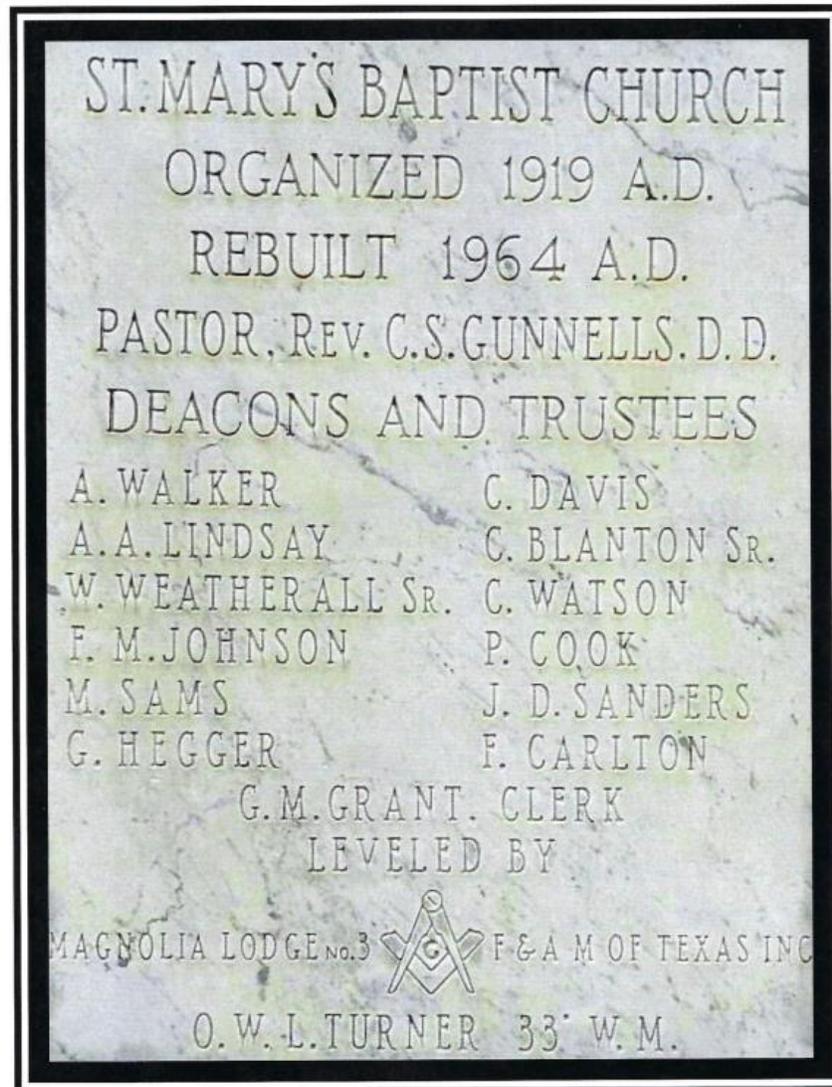
EXHIBIT G

SAINT MARY'S CURRENT CORNERSTONE 1964

SAINT MARY'S MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

4602 ELI STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77007

Cornerstone 1964



Rev C S Gunnells, Pastor



EXHIBIT H

SAINT MARY'S CONGREGATION, 1930s & 1950s

SAINT MARY'S MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

4602 ELI STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77007

HISTORICAL MEMORIES

Saint Mary's Missionary Baptist Church -Pastor Jordan

Nineteen Thirties



Gospel Chorus Nineteen Fifties



EXHIBIT I
SAINT MARY'S LETTER FROM SHEILA JACKSON LEE
SAINT MARY'S MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
4602 ELI STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77007

<p>SHEILA JACKSON LEE 18TH DISTRICT TEXAS COMMITTEES:</p> <p>JUDICIARY SUBCOMMITTEES: Ranking Member Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigation Immigration and Border Security</p> <p>HOMELAND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEES: Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies Counterterrorism and Intelligence</p> <p>BUDGET COMMITTEE</p>	<p>Congress of the United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515</p>	<p>STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE</p> <p>HELSINKI COMMISSION MEMBER</p> <p>VICE CHAIR CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS</p> <p>SINGLE WRAP DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS</p> <p>FOUNDER AND CO-CHAIR CONGRESSIONAL CHILDREN'S CAUCUS</p>
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June 9, 2019

Greetings:

On behalf of the Eighteenth Congressional District of Texas, I am pleased to extend my personal greetings to St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church and all that are participating in the Centennial Anniversary.

Thank you St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church for being an active voice in our community, and preaching the word of God. Thank you for your dedication to excellence and your untiring efforts in reminding our community that unity is not just imperative, but a necessity. Your work and dedication is truly deserving of the respect, admiration, and commendation of the United States Congress.



Sincerely,

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

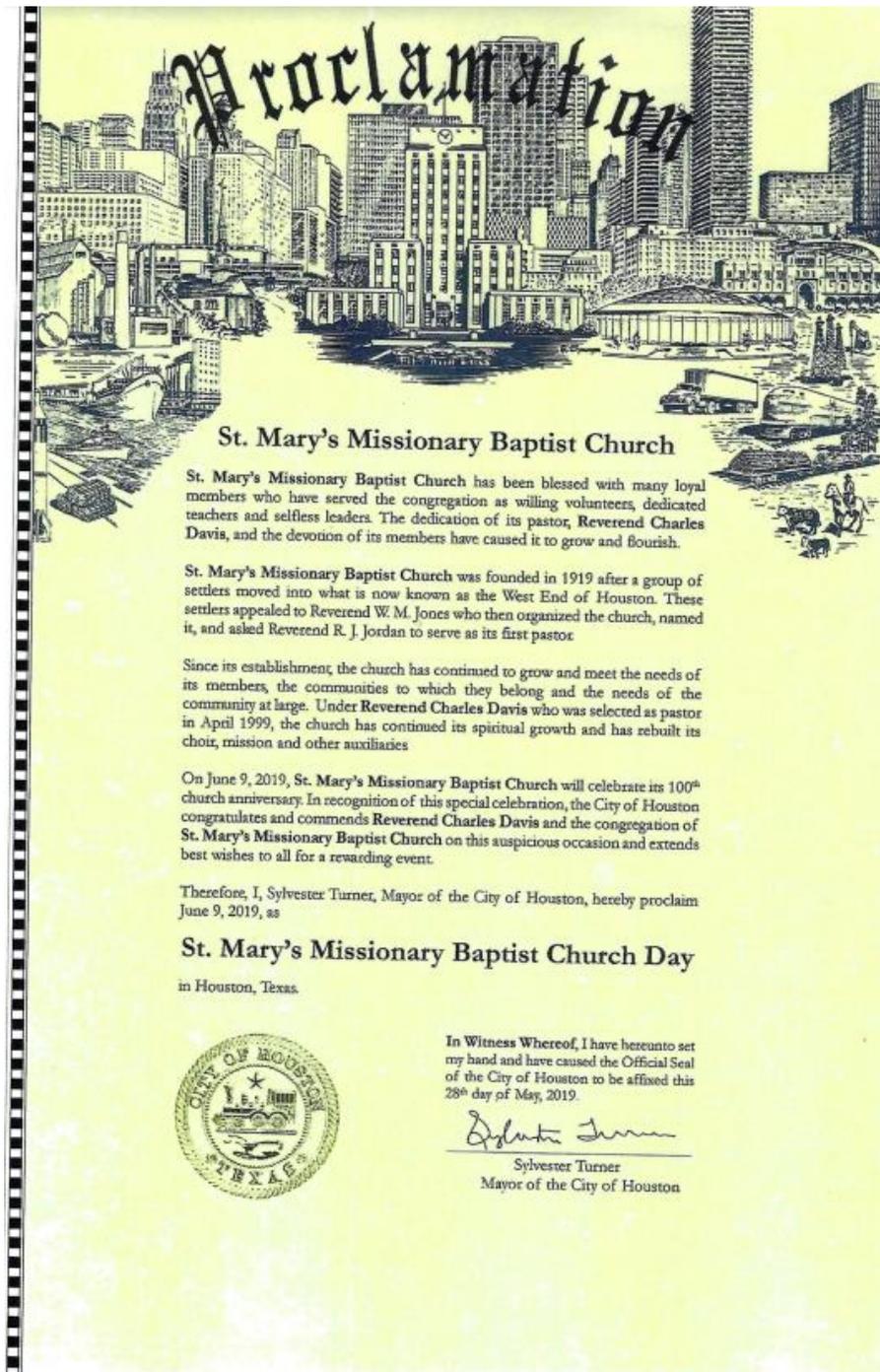
<p>WASHINGTON OFFICE: 2187 Rayburn Office Building Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-3816</p>	<p>DISTRICT OFFICE: 1919 Smith Street, Suite 1180 Houston, TX 77002 (713) 655-0050</p>	<p>HEIGHTS OFFICE: 420 West 19th Street Houston, TX 77008 (713) 861-4070</p>	<p>FIFTH WARD OFFICE: 4300 Lyons Ave., Suite 200 Houston, TX 77020 (713) 227-7740</p>
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EXHIBIT J

SAINT MARY'S MAYOR TURNER PROCLAMATION

SAINT MARY'S MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

4602 ELI STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77007



St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church

St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church has been blessed with many loyal members who have served the congregation as willing volunteers, dedicated teachers and selfless leaders. The dedication of its pastor, Reverend Charles Davis, and the devotion of its members have caused it to grow and flourish.

St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church was founded in 1919 after a group of settlers moved into what is now known as the West End of Houston. These settlers appealed to Reverend W. M. Jones who then organized the church, named it, and asked Reverend R. J. Jordan to serve as its first pastor.

Since its establishment, the church has continued to grow and meet the needs of its members, the communities to which they belong and the needs of the community at large. Under Reverend Charles Davis who was selected as pastor in April 1999, the church has continued its spiritual growth and has rebuilt its choir, mission and other auxiliaries.

On June 9, 2019, St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church will celebrate its 100th church anniversary. In recognition of this special celebration, the City of Houston congratulates and commends Reverend Charles Davis and the congregation of St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church on this auspicious occasion and extends best wishes to all for a rewarding event.

Therefore, I, Sylvester Turner, Mayor of the City of Houston, hereby proclaim June 9, 2019, as

St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church Day

in Houston, Texas.



In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and have caused the Official Seal of the City of Houston to be affixed this 28th day of May, 2019.

Sylvester Turner
Mayor of the City of Houston